

Section 2

Plan Coordination

The purpose of this section is to describe various government agencies and/or plans that affect bicycle and pedestrian transportation within the Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS) Metropolitan Planning Area (MPA). Regional initiatives that are successful involve the coordinated actions of all relevant agencies within the MPA.

2.1 Federal Government

The federal government plays an important role in the overall transportation planning process for the MPA by providing ongoing guidance and assistance. The Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) and the 1998 Transportation Efficiency Act for the 21st Century (ISTEA-21), required that the Rockford urbanized area, as a condition of federal financial assistance, have a continuing, cooperative, and comprehensive transportation planning process. These laws provide policy and funding directives for multiple modes of transportation, which include pedestrians and bicycles.

Although the ISTEA-21 expired in 2004, in August 2005, the Safe, Accountable, Flexible, Efficient Transportation Equity Act: A Legacy for Users (SAFETEA-LU) was signed into federal law. The act authorizes federal surface transportation programs for highways, highway safety, and transit for the 5-year period of 2005-2009.

2.2 State of Illinois

Illinois Department of Transportation

The Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) has the responsibility for planning, construction, and maintenance of Illinois' extensive transportation network. The network includes highways, bridges, airports, public transit, rail freight, and rail passenger systems. IDOT is divided into six modal divisions or bureaus. They include the Division of Highways, the Division of Aeronautics, Public and Inter-modal Transportation, the Bureau of Railroads, the Division of Traffic Safety, and the Office of External Affairs.

The Rockford MPA is located within the Illinois Department of Transportation (IDOT) Regional District 2 Department of Highways in Northwest Illinois. The Division of Highways works closely with communities to ensure the upkeep and maintenance of existing roads under state jurisdiction.

Each year, IDOT develops a Proposed Highway Improvement Program, which is released in the spring and distributed for public comment. The program establishes priorities for specific highway improvements. The program also identifies the set projects scheduled for the fiscal year. Although not directly related to bicycle and pedestrian improvements, the interconnection within the transportation system of these improvements to

highways/bridges is particularly relevant, as many of these facilities are built in conjunction with roadway improvements.

IDOT also establishes uniform policies and procedures for construction. The *Bureau of Design and Environmental Manual* includes standards for pedestrian and bicycle accommodations. Guidelines are detailed for sidewalk construction, on-road bicycle improvements, and separated bicycle facilities, among a variety of other established roadway design standards.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

The Grand Illinois Trail

The Grand Illinois Trail encompasses more than 500 miles between Lake Michigan and the Mississippi River. In 1990, the Illinois Department of Natural Resources (DNR) suggested the trail system. The trail is comprised of local and state trails that make the system one of the state's longest trails. The ultimate goal is to have a continuous trail rather than several segments by jurisdiction. The existing trails are suitable for bicycling and walking.

Rock Cut State Park

Approximately 23 miles of trails used for mountain biking and 40 miles of hiking trails wind through 3,000 acres of the Rock Cut State Park, operated by the Illinois DNR. The trails were re-marked completely in 2003 to accommodate the various types of trail users. The trails identified for biking and hiking are denoted by blue markers on the Park maps, although hikers also can use yellow and red-marked trails. Trail activities at the State Park have been divided into summer and winter seasons to ensure that activities do not affect the trails in a negative manner. Rock Cut State Park offers access to the Willow Creek Path and Perryville Path.

2.3 Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan

The Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan is the primary planning document for land acquisition, natural area preservation, greenway corridor, and shared-use path development for the two county area. The Plan indicates existing protected green space and potential future green space acquisitions, including recreational trails and corridors. The primary goal is to provide a comprehensive planning tool for all of the participating agencies and others involved in open space planning in Boone and Winnebago Counties. Participating agencies included the following:

- Belvidere Park District
- Boone County Conservation District
- Boone County Planning Department
- Boone County and Winnebago County Planning Department
- City of Belvidere

- City of Loves Park
- City of Rockford
- Illinois Department of Natural Resources
- Natural Land Institute¹
- Pecatonica Path Commission
- Rockford Area Transportation Study
- Rockford Park District
- Sumner Park District
- Village of Rockton
- Winnebago County Forest Preserve District
- Winnebago County Planning Department
- Winnebago Park District

One of the core concepts of the Greenway Plan is to create a regional greenways and trails network, which will connect people, neighborhoods, and natural areas to each other. Boone County and Winnebago County have adopted the Greenway Plan. The RATS 2035 Long Range Transportation Plan also has included this Plan.

2.4 Boone County

Boone County initiated the development of a comprehensive plan in response to the need for balancing their quality of life with the cost of living. The Comprehensive Plan was adopted November 10, 1999. The plan applies to the City of Belvidere, the Villages of Caledonia, Capron, Poplar Grove, and Timberlane, and the Hamlet of Garden Prairie. A main goal of Boone County is to establish a safe, convenient, and efficient multi-modal transportation system. The plan establishes five main objectives related to this transportation system; one of which is to provide for community wide non-motorized travel.

In particular, the objective for community wide non-motorized travel includes two policies. The first policy suggests that a required site plan review process is needed to ensure that all development complies with the Community Facility Plan maps, which identify areas suitable for non-motorized facilities. The second policy provides for safe and convenient pedestrian and bicycle routes within and between residential areas, schools, shopping areas, parks, medical facilities, employment centers, and mass transit facilities.

A transportation plan is included for each planning area (i.e. city and/or village) within Boone County. Some specific projects are outlined within the context of the report, but broad goals are the primary focus of each transportation plan. For instance, in Belvidere and Caledonia, the transportation plans propose the inclusion of sidewalks in all new

¹ The Natural Land Institute is a non-profit organization dedicated to preserving land and natural diversity within northern Illinois. It is headquartered in Rockford, IL.

residential and commercial areas. Sidewalks also are to be provided in Capron, Poplar Grove, and Garden Prairie. Transportation plans for Timberlane in this document do not contain any references to pedestrian and/or bicycle networks.

2.5 Winnebago County

Winnebago County has developed a 2010 Land Use Guide. This Guide provides some directives for regional land use planning in the County. The 2010 Land Use Guide does not address pedestrian and bicycle planning within Winnebago County. However, Winnebago County currently is developing a new land use plan, entitled *The 2030 Land Resource Management Plan*.

2.6 Municipal Comprehensive Planning

Throughout the MPA, communities have developed requirements and regulations guiding non-motorized circulation. For the most part, all of the comprehensive plans within the MPA incorporate initiatives to develop a pedestrian and non-motorized circulation system (See **Table 2-1, Comprehensive Plans**).

These comprehensive plans set forth goals and objectives for pedestrian and bicycle planning in short-term and long-term development. Comprehensive Plans were not reviewed for the Villages of New Millford and Winnebago.

Table 2-1 Comprehensive Plans			
Jurisdiction	Date of Plan	Pedestrian Facility Proposals	Non-Motorized Vehicle Facilities Proposals
Boone County	1999	Yes	Yes
Belvidere	The comprehensive plans are part of the Boone County Comprehensive Plan as individual elements (Belvidere also has the Westhills Neighborhood Plan).		
Caledonia			
Popular Grove			
Timberlane			
Winnebago County		No	No
Cherry Valley	2004	Yes	Yes
Loves Park	1997	Yes	Yes
Machesney Park	1994	Yes	Yes
Rockford	2004	Yes	Yes
Roscoe	2001	Yes	Yes

City of Belvidere

The city of Belvidere does not have a pedestrian and bicycle plan, but it has created two community plans that address these elements, the West Hills Neighborhood Plan and the Kishwaukee Riverfront Plan.

The West Hills Neighborhood Plan encompasses the US Business Highway 20 Corridor between the Cities of Belvidere, Rockford, and Cherry Valley.

The planning area contains numerous elements that will allow for new development to occur without causing significant harm to existing systems. Suggested improvements within the plan include convenient neighborhood-oriented commercial development, local parks, and the presence of a local collector roadway system and a pedestrian/bicycle network to link the neighborhoods together in order to ensure long-term empowerment benefits. The plan calls for the development of two forms of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. First, all arterial roads will be developed with parallel pedestrian-bicycle pathways (sidepaths) per American Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) and/or local design standards. Second, a series of recreational trails will be implemented along environmental corridors. Both systems will link with current networks within Belvidere and throughout the region.

The Kishwaukee Riverfront Plan included input from the City of Belvidere, the Belvidere Township Park District, the Boone County Conservation District, local school districts, and community groups. As stated in the 2005/2006 Annual Report for the Kishwaukee River Path, the development goals were to facilitate the extension of the recreation path north from Spencer Park to connect to the North Appleton Road Path by the Boone County Conservation District; to complete the extension of the path along the south bank of the Kishwaukee River from Doty Park to Main Street; and to begin planning for the extension of a path from the southwest corner of State Street and Big Thunder Drive along US Business Route 20 to the Prairie fields facility. The goals also include plans to explore path development through the Brownfields Site west of Main Street and in conjunction with the River Run development in the West Hills Neighborhood.

Village of Cherry Valley

The updated Comprehensive Plan, dated 2004, addresses transportation needs beyond the major roadways. The Village policy is to provide an interconnected system of designated routes for use by cyclists and pedestrians to link neighborhoods, major activity centers, and recreational facilities.

According to the Comprehensive Plan, the Village of Cherry Valley plans to coordinate efforts with the Rockford Area Transportation Study (RATS) and other relevant agencies to create and design a metropolitan wide bike/pedestrian path. The Village intends to encourage the use of existing trails within the region.

City of Loves Park

Within the “Residential Neighborhoods” Section of the Comprehensive Plan, non-motorized circulation is cited as an important issue within comprehensive planning efforts due to the current lack of pedestrian amenities in many neighborhoods. As a result, two pedestrian and bikeway network objectives are established. Primarily, a complete pedestrian network will be created that includes a system of bicycle paths, hiking trails, and parkways linking residential areas with recreation, education, shopping, and employment locations. These facilities will be placed within greenway corridors where appropriate.

Second, sidewalks will be required in all new residential developments as part of the comprehensive planning initiative. Specific locations, such as East Riverside Boulevard, will be targeted for sidewalk construction. Support from federal, state, and regional bike programs are part of these objectives, as well.

The specific components of the comprehensive plan related to bikeway trails and pedestrian paths outline the need for making the non-motorized transportation system an integral part of the Loves Park Transportation Plan. The paths can help promote tourism through connections with the Rockford Park District, the Grand Illinois Trail, and Rock Cut State Park. Bike paths also will link schools. Construction of bike paths will be facilitated through zoning incentives and bonuses negotiated under planned development procedures.

Village of Machesney Park

One of the goals established in the Machesney Park Village Plan was to create a transportation system serving the Village, which provides for safe and efficient movement of vehicles, pedestrians, and cyclists. Another objective states that local bicycle improvement programs are to be coordinated with plans and programs of RATS. In addition, sidewalks are to become part of the Village's capital improvement and street improvement plans.

The Comprehensive Plan also includes General Guidelines for General Corridor Improvements. The guidelines suggest that sidewalks should be provided along both sides of all corridors and set back from the curb lines as far as possible. A minimum of 3-5 feet is recommended, and all should have curb cuts or ramps to assist the elderly and physically disabled.

The Comprehensive Plan focuses on establishing key bicycle and pedestrian connections throughout the community within its Transportation Plan. This portion of the Comprehensive Plan includes recommendations for sidewalk construction on at least one side of all streets, while promoting safety as a main catalyst for their development. Sidewalks are to be built based upon the need to connect major pedestrian generators and destinations within the community, to connect isolated developments, and to provide safe access across major arterials. Three types of bicycle facilities are listed that can be developed, as well. These include bicycle paths, marked bike lanes, and bicycle routes.

City of Rockford

In section "Plan Element II: Land Use," of the *2020 City of Rockford Plan*, a number of recommendations are made in reference to the pedestrian and non-motorized vehicle circulation. The Plan accounts for the development of a wide variety of transportation choices including: providing sidewalks in all developments; ensuring that parking needs and requirements do not affect pedestrians adversely; allowing for clustering facilities; and creating a comprehensive bicycle program.

Within “Plan Element III: Transportation” of the *2020 Plan*, the primary goal for non-motorized transportation is to define ways in which Rockford can make walking trips accessible, convenient, safe, and enjoyable. Five main policies are established for the City of Rockford in order to accomplish this goal:

- 1) Create a physical environment that will encourage walking through design mechanisms allowing for convenient, accessible, and safe pedestrian travel.
- 2) Develop bicycle and pedestrian circulation routes in conjunction with the Rockford Park District and the Rockford School District education programs to encourage safe use of the facilities.
- 3) Reduce the perception of motorized vehicle domains and promote the notion of shared spaces between motorized and non-motorized vehicles.
- 4) Encourage good design to enhance the look and feel of the pedestrian environment.
- 5) Enforce laws and regulations to promote safety.

In order to accomplish these policies, the City of Rockford sets forth a number of steps, which include limiting waivers for sidewalk construction in new developments.

With regard to the bicycle system, Rockford has chosen the separate pathway system of providing for mixed bicycle/pedestrian/rollerblade traffic. The comprehensive plan calls for paved trails that will parallel the Rock River to the north and south; will radiate from downtown; will form a grid with other trails; and will link to the Grand Illinois Trail System.

Village of Roscoe

The Village of Roscoe has established a series of goals outlined within their comprehensive plan based upon findings of interviews with community leaders and workshops with the Comprehensive Plan Update Committee. As part of the transportation needs, the Village goal is to continue development of a safe pedestrian and bicycle circulation system, which consists of sidewalks, off-street trails, and paved shoulders on collector streets. A series of paths and trails are planned as part of the Comprehensive Plan. They will be built as funding becomes available.

2.7 Park Districts

Belvidere Township Park District

The Belvidere Park District mission is to develop and to maintain, in cooperation with all interested individuals and groups, a responsive, efficient, and creative parks and recreation system. The Park District works with the Kishwaukee Riverfront Committee to maintain and to repair two plus miles of asphalt paths for biking and hiking.

Rockford Park District

The Rockford Park District maintains a number of bicycle and pedestrian facilities. The path systems include the Rock River Recreation Path, the Mel Anderson Memorial Pathway, and the Cherry Valley Path. The Park District partners with other local agencies in order to help maintain and to promote neighborhood park and state paths. All hard surface paths within the Park District are designed, built, and maintained with specifications in accordance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA).

Winnebago Park District

The Winnebago Park District seeks to provide recreational opportunities for residents and guests within the County; however, no specific mention of paths and/or trails is made in future planning efforts.

2.8 Forest Preserves and Conservation Districts

Boone County Conservation District

The Boone County Conservation District is responsible for the asphalt-surfaced Long Prairie Trail, which runs from the Boone/McHenry County line through the Villages of Capron, Poplar Grove, and Caledonia to the Roland Olson Forest Preserve in Winnebago County. The trail has access/parking in each of the three villages and at the Boone/McHenry county line road. The trail area now occupies former railroad beds, originally owned by the Chicago & Northwestern Railroad. It is comprised of a 14.2-mile asphalt trail containing interpretative signage.

Winnebago County Forest Preserve District

The Winnebago County Forest Preserve District (WCFPD) manages 38 individual forest preserves for the purpose of protecting the natural resources of Winnebago County and for promoting education and recreation. The District has over 87 miles of trails for walking, riding, hiking, and skiing. Blackhawk Springs has a new 2-mile paved recreation trail, and Headquarters Forest Preserve has a one-mile loop of paved trail that connects to the Rock River/Grand Illinois Trail. They are the only trails to be designated for bicycle use, whereas all other parks require bicycle use on roadways.

Hiking is promoted as one of the major activities within the WCFPD. Deer Run offers over 9 miles of hiking and equestrian trails; while Pecatonica River and Wetlands has a combined 17.5 miles of hiking trails. Seward Bluff has 8 miles of hiking and equestrian trails, Sugar River has 6 miles of hiking trails, and of the remaining top 18 preserves, none have over three miles of hiking trails. Future plans within the preserves are part of the Boone-Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan (See **Section 2.3 Boone and Winnebago Regional Greenways Plan**).

The North Rock Open Spaces Plan (2002) prepared by the Winnebago Forest Preserve District and the Upper Rock River Partnership, indicates routes that are planned for the area along the upper reaches of the Rock River, including portions of South Beloit, Rockton, and Roscoe. The objective is to create a system of paths linking population centers, schools, parks, and other destinations along the Rock River Corridor.

2.9 Surrounding Counties

Four counties within Illinois border Winnebago and Boone Counties. These consist of DeKalb, McHenry, Ogle, and Stephenson Counties. To the north, Winnebago County is bordered by Rock County in the state of Wisconsin.

Connections to the surrounding counties offer opportunities to enlarge the regional pedestrian and bicycle network within the MPA and to provide links outside of the MPA for residents and users. Furthermore, the connections expand on a growing rise in tourism and health conscious activity linked to the recreational trails in both Illinois and Wisconsin.

McHenry County, Illinois

The Long Prairie Trail, part of the Grand Illinois Trail, extends from the Boone/McHenry County line west through Capron and Poplar Grove. Plans for extending the trail through McHenry County exist, but the implementation schedule is not known.

Ogle County, Illinois

Ogle County borders Winnebago County to the south. The County government has initiated efforts targeted at pedestrian and bicycle improvements. In 2003, the Ogle County Planning and Zoning Department, along with the Greenways and Trails Committee, developed a long-range, visionary master plan, entitled *Ogle County Greenways & Trails Plan*. The plan calls for the creation of recreational greenways, featuring paths and trails of varying distances. The primary connections into Winnebago County are along the Hoisington Road, which connects to the Pecatonica Prairie Path (Grand Illinois Trail) and along the Rock River (See **Figure 2-1, Ogle County Potential Recreation Trails**).

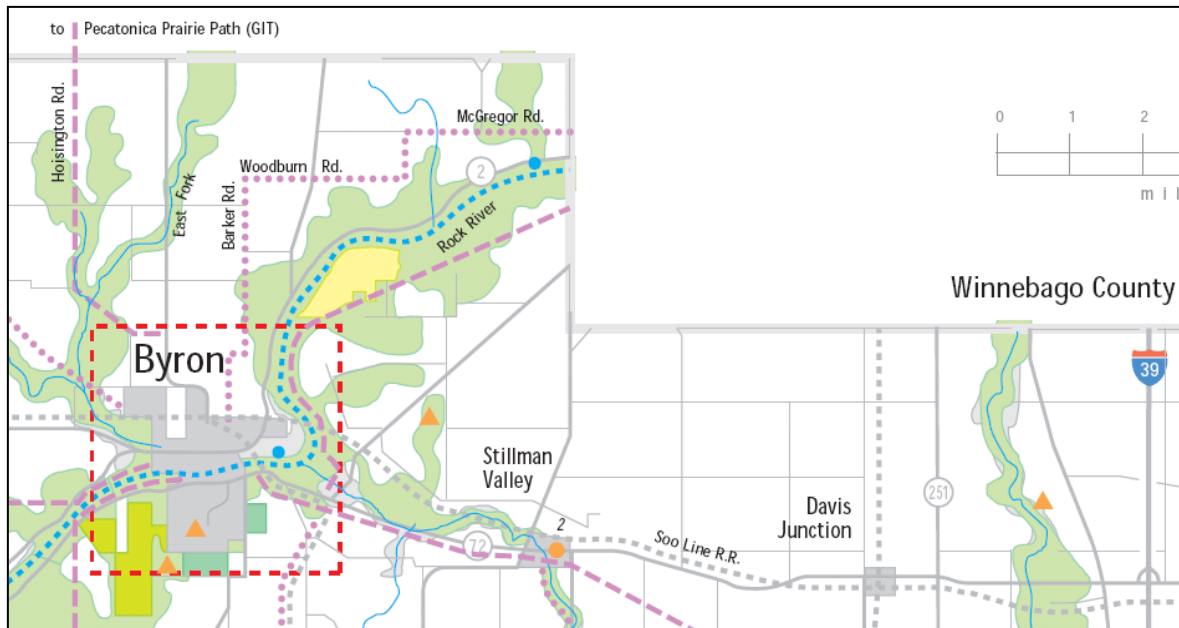


Figure 2-1
Ogle County Potential Recreation Trails
 (Source: Ogle County *Greenways and Trails Plan*)

Stephenson County, Illinois

Stephenson County has a number of bicycle trails within the county borders that have the potential to be linked to the trail system in the RATS MPA. They consist of the following:

- 1) The Pecatonica Prairie Path - This path is a 20-mile long nature trail with a railroad ballast surface. It is best used for hiking, mountain biking, horseback riding, and cross country skiing. It links East Hillcrest Road east of Freeport to Meridian Road west of Rockford. The path also meets with the Jane Addams trail.
- 2) The Jane Addams Recreation Trail - This 13-mile trail is part of the Grand Illinois Trail that links Freeport to Orangeville. The trail is a limestone path used by hikers, bicyclists, snowmobilers, and cross country skiers. Further development will connect this trail with the Pecatonica Prairie Path, as well as the Madison-Freeport State Trail. The latter is under construction and when complete will run from Madison, Wisconsin to Freeport, Illinois. Forty-five miles of the trail would be included in Wisconsin and fourteen miles in Illinois (See **Figure 2-2, Pecatonica Prairie Path and Jane Addams Trail**).

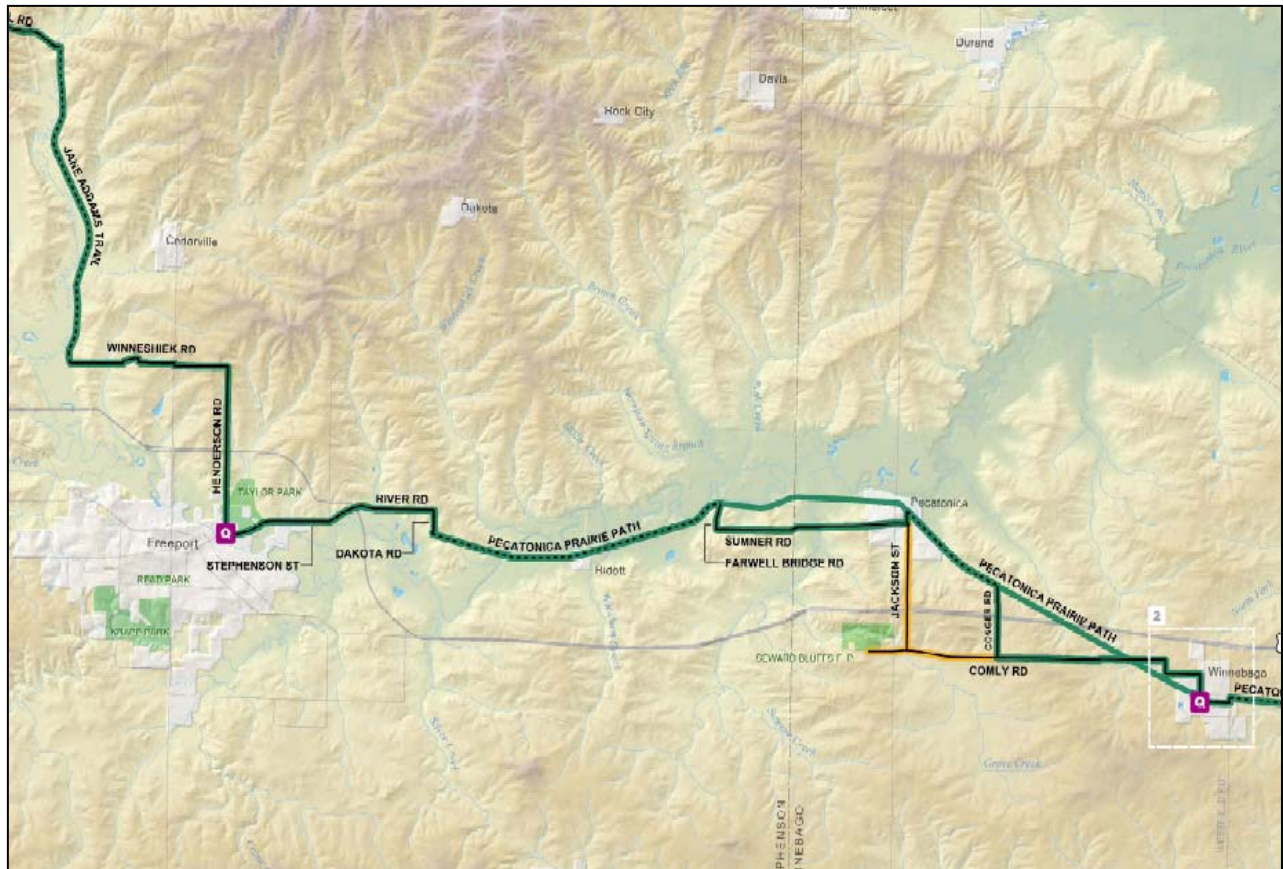


Figure 2-2
Pecatonica Prairie Path and Jane Addams Trail
 (Source: Openlands-Grand Illinois Trail Maps)

Rock County, Wisconsin

Rock County has an extensive system of existing trails and proposed trails. The *Park, Outdoor Recreation, and Open Space Plan* (POROS) adopted in 2003 contains the following element:

- The bicycle/pedestrian trails and routes should provide regional interconnectivity as a component of the Master Plan for the Janesville Area, the State Line Area Transportation Study, and surrounding counties.

2.10 The State Line Area Transportation Study

The State Line Area Transportation Study (SLATS) is the designated Metropolitan Planning Organization for the Beloit Urbanized Area in Rock County, Wisconsin and Winnebago County, Illinois. SLATS is represented by a number of local governments

within Wisconsin, but also includes the Illinois communities of South Beloit and Rockton.

In September 2006, SLATS adopted their 2035 Long-Range Transportation Plan. Five main goals were established to address the bicycle and pedestrian system within the SLATS planning area. They are:

- Reducing motor vehicle dependency and assuring bike and pedestrian access.
- Encouraging local planning that supports walking and cycling.
- Integrating the Stateline Bicycle and Pedestrian System with the region.
- Following approved standards to create a safe Bicycle and Pedestrian System.
- Education and awareness that promotes use of the Bicycle and Pedestrian System.

The long range plan recognizes a strong public desire for a Rock River Route that would provide a link to the north connecting the Janesville area to Illinois trails. Illinois Bicycle grants also have been awarded to continue development of a 1.36 mile trail section of the Dorr Road Bike Path, which provides a northern link to South Beloit from Rockton.